

PREFACE

New York State at the beginning of the 19th century was a hotbed of religious revival, and fertile ground for the birth of many new religious sects. Most lasted only as long as the fervor of their self-proclaimed prophets lasted, but one, The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints, sprouted and grew like a seed in fertile soil, its growth matched only by the energy and zeal of its youthful founder and followers.

Into those tumultuous times were born two men, not far apart in time or distance. One was destined to bring forth a new dispensation of the gospel in a fresh new faith. His name was Joseph Smith, to be remembered and revered by his followers for all time. The other was Joseph Stacy Murdock, destined to be the new prophet's strong right arm. But even in those early days of the church he was known only to those close to the prophet, and today he is nearly forgotten except to family members and those who research the archives of history.

The story of Joseph Smith is well known to nearly everyone, but somehow historians have overlooked the life of Joseph Murdock, one of the church's earliest converts and certainly one of its most zealous supporters, as well as being numbered among its hardest

working pioneers and colonizers. The following pages have been written to give Joseph Murdock his rightful place in history. Hopefully, they will also present a new insight into the life of Joseph Smith and his successor, Brigham Young, as well as on those exciting early days of church history.

The life and times of Joseph Murdock may also shed new light on such little known events as the Utah War and the Carson Valley, Muddy River and Heber Valley missions. And although this book is essentially the story of Joseph Murdock, events in the life of his brother Nymphus Murdock are so closely intertwined with his and are of such interest that they are frequently mentioned also.

The story begins in the New York State of the early 1800's and ends in the newly designated State of Utah nearly a century later. A lifetime of faith, courage and adventure lies in between. The basic facts of the life of Joseph Murdock are found in his journal and in his reminiscences as recorded by his children and grand-children. Fortunately, most of the questions left by gaps in his journal have been answered by the diaries and journals of those he served with. Additional information has been gleaned from various church, historical and published records, as well as from personal interviews.

Joseph Murdock's experiences with the prophet Joseph Smith and his adventures on the Mormon frontier may be almost unbelievable to today's skeptical generation, but nearly every incident mentioned in his journal is confirmed by some other source, as is noted in the many references cited by footnotes. If the story of his life recalls

the strength and courage of pioneer days to those who never knew them, or renews the faith of even one of today's doubtful youth, the labor represented herein will have been well repaid.